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SUBJECT: SOUTHERN SUDAN'S JONGLEI STATE - HUMANITARIAN SITUATION
REPORT

REF: A) KHARTOUM 446
B) KHARTOUM 375

Summary

[11](#). (U) Relief organizations are responding to the estimated 22,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Jonglei with emergency assistance; however, the logistical challenges of the approaching rainy season, lack of roads, insecurity caused by numerous ethnic rivalries and armed groups, and the remote location of the IDPs pose significant challenges to providing assistance. Secure road and river access are essential to ensuring that food and other relief supplies can be delivered and markets continue to function. Relief activities need to be linked to grassroots peace-building and higher-level peace initiatives to help stabilize Jonglei. End Summary.

Background: Politicized Ethnic Fighting, Cattle Rustling, and External Meddling

[12](#). (U) Despite unifying events such as the 2006 Juba Peace Accord, which brought significant numbers of formerly pro-Khartoum Southern Sudan Defense Forces militia into the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS), greater Upper Nile region, which includes Upper Nile, Unity, and Lakes states in addition to Jonglei, remains the most unstable region in Southern Sudan. Underlying the political conflict has been traditional tribal cattle-raiding, as well as lack of well-established government security forces in rural areas and unsuccessful disarmament in the region due to the fact that some groups will not voluntarily disarm in the absence of government security.

[13](#). (U) One UN staff member characterized the current problems in the region (reftels A and B) as a "hangover of power" among local authorities and militias from the war. In general, the lack of effective policing and governance hampers the ability of former combatant groups to transition to civilian governance structures. Small arms are widely available and carried by civilians in rural areas. In this environment, traditional cattle-raiding and resource conflicts easily escalate into violent encounters.

Effects of Escalating Conflict in Jonglei in 2009

[14](#). (U) While inter-ethnic violence is an age-old occurrence in the greater Upper Nile region, new trends in 2009 have increased concern among humanitarian staff. In a meeting with USAIDoff, a UN Resident

Coordinator's Support Office (RCSO) field staff member who has worked extensively in the region identified the destruction of public buildings in Lekuangole Payam during the March 5 to 12 Lou-Nuer attacks as a new and concerning development. The RCSO staff member also identified Lou-Nuer abduction of Murle children during raids as evidence of a new conflict dynamic. Historically, Nuer have not abducted children, as kidnapping is against their culture, according to a prominent member of the Lou-Nuer and Jikany ethnic groups. In contrast, Murle are notorious for a long history of abducting Dinka and Nuer children in the region.

15. (U) According to the RCSO, the fighting had displaced approximately 15,000 Nuer IDPs to Akobo town and 7,000 Murle IDPs to Pibor town as of May 17. The IDPs are mostly residing with families and are integrated within the community. According to relief staff, IDPs are unwilling to return home until the security situation stabilizes and they feel protected from future attacks.

16. (U) In addition, local NGO staff report that conflict between Lou-Nuer and Jikany groups north of Akobo has resulted in limited commercial goods arriving to Akobo market. Aid agencies fear that the restricted flow of commercially available goods will impact the region's food security in the coming weeks with potentially serious consequences later on, as rains imminently make roads impassible and prevent traders from resupplying the market.

--The Most Recent Attack--

17. (U) On May 8, Lou Nuer attacked the Jikany village of Torkech in Jikmir Payam located in the south of Nasir County, approximately 20 km from Nasir town. According to reports from non-governmental organization (NGO) field staff, the attack killed 47 people and

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wounded nearly 50 others. A local NGO identified 50 orphans who were transported to Nasir town by boat and reported that 1,550 people are displaced in five villages in Nasir County. Some IDPs are reportedly gathering in Nasir town. In addition, the attackers reportedly destroyed homes and looted personal property.

18. (U) According to USAID staff, the Torkech incident relates to the broader problem between two large Nuer communities - the Eastern Jikany Nuer of Nasir, Ulang, Maiwut, and Longechuk counties (and also in Ethiopia); and the Lou Nuer of Jonglei State, primarily in Wuror, Nyirol, and Akobo counties. Insufficient amount of water constitutes a key conflict driver for the Lou, who lack access to water in the dry season in their heartland in central Jonglei. As a result, the Lou and their cattle travel to areas with permanent water near the Sobat River, where they encounter the Jikany; the Akobo River, where they meet Jikany and Anyuak; and the Nile River, where they come across Dinka and other Nuer in Ayod. As of May 17, relief workers expected further retaliatory attacks to continue until the rains hinder armed groups' movement in the region or security is improved throughout the region.

Humanitarian Situation for the IDPs

19. (SBU) The RCSO reported that poor logistics represents one of the key challenges in delivering humanitarian assistance to the IDPs in Jonglei. On May 19, the UN Joint Logistics Center (UNJLC) reported that the delivery of more than 2,400 non-food item (NFI) kits, as well as mosquito nets and kitchen sets to communities in Akobo had been delayed due to poor road conditions, and reported that NFIs are being held in Waat and Walgak. In addition to the usual road difficulties during the April/June to September rainy season, the Pibor-Bor road is currently plagued by insecurity linked to the inter-ethnic conflict, making delivery of relief supplies unpredictable. As of mid-May, Akobo town is only accessible via river from Nassir. However, aid agencies report that the river route is currently impassible due to the presence of armed groups and uncertainty over further outbreaks of violence. On May 21, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) has a river boat capable of providing force protection to humanitarian river convoys,

but that the boat is not fully functional.

¶10. (SBU) The RCSO staff member reports that Dinka, Murle, and Lou Nuer groups will not permit relief convoys to pass through their areas to deliver assistance to the other groups. During a May 21 meeting, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that local officials in Nuer areas in Waat and Walgak refused to allow the transport of 250 NFI kits out of the area once they noted that the supplies were destined for Murle groups in Pibor. (Note: UNJLC unloaded the NFIs in Waat and Walgak, at which time community members took note of the load list indicating that the supplies would be transported to Pibor. End Note.) OCHA and UNMIS are working to resolve this issue with the local county commissioners, but as of May 21 the issue had not yet been resolved.

¶11. (U) Both Pibor and Akobo can be reached by air, but delivery of food and NFIs via airlift would be costly and time consuming. UN field staff note that badly-needed food and emergency relief supplies can continue to be delivered by road using Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) armed escorts or UNMIS force protection for relief convoys as long as the roads do not become too muddy or blocked by seasonal rivers. However, OCHA notes concern that using SPLA-provided escorts to conduct relief deliveries would undermine the humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality and are particularly sensitive given the history of forced disarmament in these areas in previous years. OCHA has requested UNMIS force protection for relief convoys traveling to Jonglei State and is hopeful that with the increased UNMIS presence in the state UNMIS will be able to be the primary armed escort instead of SPLA.

¶12. (U) Various UN agencies are responding to the immediate needs of the IDPs. However, the RCSO notes that gaps exist in health care and water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance. Relief workers note particular concern for vulnerable groups among the IDPs, which include child-headed households, unaccompanied children, wounded individuals, and the elderly. Aid staff anticipate that emergency needs for food and emergency relief supplies will remain an urgent priority for displaced populations in the coming months.

¶13. (U) The UN World Food Program (WFP) is providing emergency food rations to the IDPs in both Pibor and Akobo. However, delivery of additional food dispatches has been problematic in both areas due to

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attacks on convoys, looting of food, and poor road conditions. WFP reports that a convoy of trucks was able to reach Pibor between May 14 and 15, carrying 176 metric tons (MT) of commodities, of which 63 MT will be given to Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) for use in the hospital. The last 30-day food distribution to IDPs in Pibor occurred in March. In Akobo, IDPs were given a 15-day ration in late April, and WFP has 100 MT of commodities in warehouses in the area and dispatched another 600 MT recently. WFP reports that some of the trucks are stuck on the roads and some food has been looted, but exact amounts are not yet known. WFP is currently conducting an emergency food assessment in Pibor and planning a second assessment for Akobo, which should be underway imminently.

¶14. (U) WFP is currently in the midst of prepositioning food stocks throughout Southern Sudan, moving food into remote areas where road access will soon become extremely difficult or impossible once heavy rains commence. The emergency relief requirement to support the growing number of IDPs in eastern Jonglei is straining WFP's ability to preposition sufficient food stocks in these areas for its 'normal' activities, as well as to provide general food rations for thousands of IDPs. WFP anticipates being able to start using river transport to deliver food in Akobo, but only starting in July once the river is deep enough for the barges to move freely. WFP now reports that it will have to resort to airlifting some of the food needed in these remote areas. While WFP budgeted for airlifting 1200 MT in their 2009 emergency operation, it projects having to airlift more than the budgeted amount this year, with upwards of 1500 MT required for Jonglei State alone. WFP is currently starting to approach donors to request earmarked funds for the airlift operation.

¶15. (U) Abducted children and unaccompanied minors are among the

highest protection concerns for the humanitarian community. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) had registered 142 missing children and 10 missing women in Pibor and Lekuangle, as of April 8. Urgent cooperation is needed among local authorities to secure the release of abducted children from both Nuer and Murle groups. The international community discourages the practice of "trading children" as part of a negotiated peace process, as has been done in the past, and insists that children must be returned to families independent of negotiated peace processes. UNICEF is initiating tracing and reunification programs in the area to address these concerns.

¶16. (SBU) While it is impossible to be certain, relief workers familiar with the area believe that many IDPs will begin to return to home villages in a month or two after the rains have commenced. As of May 21, thousands of IDPs had not yet been verified or registered and new reports of secondary displacement were being received, according to OCHA. According to a local NGO staff member, only women, children, and the elderly are considered as IDPs. Youth and men normally remain with their cattle away from villages until the rainy season. When youth and cattle return home, IDPs will most likely feel protected and opt to return home. As of May 21, youth remained in cattle camps; however, youth are expected to begin moving to home areas in the coming months. The rainy season is also a safer time for villagers because it is more difficult for aggressors to move around. As of May 21, the security situation in Jonglei remained uncertain, particularly after MSF staff evacuated Pibor town on May 20 after staff witnessed Murle youth gathering with arms around the area. If UNMIS succeeds with its stabilization plan, emergency organizations will immediately switch gears to assist IDPs to return home and resettle. If the security situation continues to prompt new displacement, the focus must remain on meeting the urgent needs of IDPs and affected host communities in one of the most difficult remote areas in the region.

--USG Priorities and Assistance--

¶17. (U) Based on discussions with NGOs and UN agencies in Juba, USAID staff project that the current emergency response will have to be sustained for the coming two months at a minimum. If IDPs begin returning home, the focus will shift from meeting immediate needs to assisting communities to resettle and rebuild destroyed villages, homes, and livelihoods. According to USAID humanitarian staff in Juba, current priority humanitarian needs in Jonglei include food, shelter, health care, NFIs, livelihood support, and water, sanitation, and hygiene. Rapid small interventions such as cash-for-work would enable communities to earn much-needed cash and rebuild some community infrastructure or homes for vulnerable families. In addition, emergency efforts to avoid outbreaks of waterborne diseases in Akobo and Pibor are priority interventions.

¶18. (U) To meet immediate needs, USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign

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Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) has funded IOM to provide 3,000 NFI kits, which include 15 pieces of soap, 2 mosquito nets, cooking utensils, 2 blankets, 2 sleeping mats, 2 water containers, and a piece of plastic sheeting, to affected families in Jonglei, as well as logistical support to the overall humanitarian response. USAID/OFDA has also funded Save the Children/U.S. in an ongoing primary health care program that operates five health facilities in Akobo County, serving IDPs and affected populations. To assist in resolving long-term water scarcity, USAID/OFDA has funded PACT's water program in the area that recently completed nearly 40 new boreholes in Pibor and Akobo counties. USAID/OFDA is in consultations with NGOs on providing additional resources to support efforts to scale-up the emergency response in Jonglei and address the most urgent humanitarian needs among the displaced population.

¶19. (U) At present, WFP has sufficient food stocks in its pipeline to cover emergency food requirements for the current displaced populations in eastern Jonglei State and has not approached USAID's Office of Food for Peace (USAID/FFP) for additional contributions. To date in Fiscal Year (FY) 2009, USAID/FFP has contributed 333.6 million USD to WFP, of which approximately 48.3 million USD is being

channeled to Southern Sudan.

Comments

¶20. (U) Physical security for IDPs and humanitarian agencies and GOSS political will are needed to resolve the current escalating conflict in Jonglei. While agencies have initiated an emergency response, it is concerning that food and NFIs have not yet reached IDPs, particularly in Akobo area, due to logistical constraints. WFP and other UN agencies are working hard to find solutions to move the food and NFIs into affected areas in Jonglei, but time is of the essence. USAID/FFP and USAID/OFDA will continue to monitor the humanitarian situation and work with UN and NGO partners to meet the urgent needs of IDPs in the area. The situation in Jonglei serves as a stark reminder of the need to maintain significant emergency response capacity in Southern Sudan, while continuing to work on development priorities.

ASQUINO